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In Vinculis.



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IN VINCULIS.









# IN VINCULIS.

BY

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT,

AUTHOR OF "THE WIND AND THE WHIRLWIND,"

"THE LOVE SONNETS OF PROTEUS,"

ETC., ETC.



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DEDICATION.

TO THE  
PRIESTS AND PEASANTRY OF IRELAND,  
WHO FOR  
THREE HUNDRED YEARS  
HAVE PRESERVED THE TRADITION OF A  
RIGHTEOUS WAR  
FOR  
FAITH AND FREEDOM.

812150



## PREFACE.

In dedicating these poems to the priests and peasantry of Ireland, their author desires to acknowledge his deep gratitude towards them, not for their sympathy only, and this was great, but for much else which, though difficult to express, will be divined in their perusal.

The earliest of the pieces, those headed "In Vinculis," were with a few exceptions actually written (on the fly-leaves of the Author's prayer-book) in Galway and Kilmainham gaols. The rest were either designed in prison or composed in connection with the events of the time. They record an episode in the writer's life to which, in spite of many austerities and some real suffering, he cannot look back otherwise than with affection. Imprisonment is a reality of discipline most useful

to the modern soul, lapped as it is in physical sloth and self-indulgence. Like a sickness or a spiritual retreat it purifies and ennobles; and the soul emerges from it stronger and more self-contained. Alas, that these influences should so soon lose their power!—And yet, fall as we may from the higher level, they do not wholly perish, but remain for us a wholesome recollection and a standard of all that we can imagine best for this life and another.

W. S. B.

Crabbet Park, Sussex,  
*Oct.* 23, 1888.



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# “IN VINCULIS.”

## SONNETS

WRITTEN IN PRISON.

### I.

From Caiaphas to Pilate I was sent,  
Who judged with unwashed hands a crime to me.  
Next came the sentence, and the soldiery  
Claimed me their prey. Without, the people rent  
With weeping voices the loud firmament.  
And through the night from town to town  
passed we  
’Mid shouts and drums and stones hurled heavily  
By angry crowds on love and murder bent.  
  
And last the gaol—what stillness in these doors !  
The silent turnkeys their last bolts have shot,  
And their steps die in the long corridors.  
I am alone. My tears run fast and hot.  
Dear Lord, for Thy grief’s sake I kiss these floors  
Kneeling—then turn to sleep, dreams trouble not.

## II.

Naked I came into the world of pleasure,  
And naked come I to this house of pain.  
Here at the gate I lay down my life's treasure,  
My pride, my garments and my name with men.  
The world and I henceforth shall be as twain,  
No sound of me shall pierce for good or ill  
These walls of grief. Nor shall I hear the vain  
Laughter and tears of those who love me still.

Within, what new life waits me ! Little ease,  
Cold lying, hunger, nights of wakefulness,  
Harsh orders given, no voice to soothe or please,  
Poor thieves for friends, for books rules meaning-  
less ;  
This is the grave—nay, hell. Yet, Lord of Might,  
Still in Thy light my spirit shall see light.

---

## III.

Honoured I lived erewhile with honoured men  
In opulent state. My table nightly spread  
Found guests of worth, peer, priest and citizen,  
And poet crowned, and beauty garlanded.  
Nor these alone, for hunger too I fed,  
And many a lean tramp and sad Magdalen  
Passed from my doors less hard for sake of bread.  
Whom grudged I ever purse or hand or pen ?

To-night, unwelcomed at these gates of woe  
I stand with churls, and there is none to greet  
My weariness with smile or courtly show  
Nor, though I hunger long, to bring me meat.  
God ! what a little accident of gold  
Fences our weakness from the wolves of old !

---

## IV.

How shall I build my Temple to the Lord,  
Unworthy I, who am thus foul of heart ?  
How shall I worship who no traitor word  
Know but of love to play a suppliant's part ?  
How shall I pray, whose soul is as a mart  
For thoughts unclean, whose tongue is as a sword  
Even for those it loves to wound and smart ?  
Behold how little I can help Thee, Lord.

The Temple I would build should all be white,  
Each stone the record of a blameless day ;  
The souls that entered there should walk in light,  
Clothed in high chastity and wisely gay.  
Lord, here is darkness—yet this heart unwise,  
Bruised in Thy service, take in sacrifice.

---

## V.

A prison is a convent without God—

Poverty, Chastity, Obedience

Its precepts are. In this austere abode

None gather wealth of pleasure or of pence.

Woman's light wit, the heart's concupiscence

Are banished here. At the least warder's nod

Thy neck shall bend in mute subservience,

Nor yet for virtue—rather for the rod.

Here a base turnkey novice-master is,

Teaching humility. The matin bell

Calls thee to toil, but little comforteth.

None heed thy prayers or give the kiss of peace.

Nathless, my soul, be valiant. Even in Hell

Wisdom shall preach to thee of life and death.

---

## VI.

There are two voices with me in the night,  
Easing my grief. The God of Israel saith,  
“I am the Lord thy God which vanquisheth.  
“See that thou walk unswerving in my sight,  
“So shall thy enemies thy footstool be.  
“I will avenge.” Then wake I suddenly,  
And as a man new armoured for the fight,  
I shout aloud against my enemy.

Anon, another speaks, a voice of care  
With sorrow laden and akin to grief,  
“My son,” it saith, “What is my will with  
thee?  
“The burden of my sorrows thou shalt share.  
“With thieves thou too shalt be accounted thief,  
“And in my kingdom thou shalt sup with me.”

---



## VII.

Long have I searched the earth for liberty,  
In desert places and lands far abroad,  
Where neither kings nor constables should be,  
Nor any law of Man, alas, or God.  
Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood,  
These were my quarries, which eternally  
Fled from my footsteps fast as I pursued,  
Sad phantoms of desire by land and sea.

See, it is ended. Sick and overborne  
By foes and fools, and my long chase, I lie—  
Here, in these walls, with all life's souls forlorn  
Herded I wait,—and in my ears the cry,  
“Alas, poor brothers, equal in Man's scorn,  
“And free in God's good liberty to die.”

---

## VIII.

'Tis time, my soul, thou should'st be purged of pride.

What men are these with thee, whose ill deeds done  
Make thee thus shrink from them and be denied?

They are but as thou art, each mother's son  
A convict in transgression—Here is one,  
Sayest thou, who struck his fellow and he died.

And yet he weeps hot tears. Do thy tears run?  
This other thieved, yet clasps Christ crucified.

Where is thy greater virtue? Thinkest thou sin

Is but crime's record on the judgment seat?  
Or must thou wait for death to be bowed down?  
Oh for a righteous reading which should join

Thy deeds together in an accusing sheet,  
And leave thee if thou could'st, to face men's frown!

---

## IX.

Behold the Court of Penance. Four gaunt walls  
Shutting out all things but the upper heaven.  
Stone flags for floor, where daily from their stalls  
The human cattle in a circle driven  
Tread down their pathway to a mire uneven,  
Pale-faced, sad-eyed, and mute as funerals.  
Woe to the wretch whose weakness unforgiven  
Falters a moment in the track or falls.

Yet is there consolation. Overhead  
The pigeons build and the loud jackdaws talk,  
And once in the wind's eye, like a ship moored,  
A sea-gull flew and I was comforted.  
Even here the heavens declare thy glory, Lord,  
And the free firmament thy handiwork.

---

## X.

My prison has its pleasures. Every day  
At breakfast-time, spare meal of milk and bread,  
Sparrows come trooping in familiar way  
With head aside beseeching to be fed.  
A spider too for me has spun her thread  
Across the prison rules, and a brave mouse  
Watches in sympathy the warders' tread,  
These two my fellow-prisoners in the house.

But about dusk in the rooms opposite  
I see lamps lighted, and upon the blind  
A shadow passes all the evening through.  
It is the gaoler's daughter fair and kind  
And full of pity—so I image it—  
Till the stars rise, and night begins anew.

---

## XI.

God knows, 'twas not with a fore-reasoned plan  
I left the easeful dwellings of my peace,  
And sought this combat with ungodly Man,  
And ceaseless still through years that do not cease  
Have warred with Powers and Principalities.  
My natural soul, ere yet these strifes began,  
Was as a sister diligent to please  
And loving all, and most the human clan.

God knows it. And He knows how the world's tears  
Touched me. And He is witness of my wrath,  
How it was kindled against murderers  
Who slew for gold, and how upon their path  
I met them. Since which day the World in arms  
Strikes at my life with angers and alarms.

---

## XII.

There are wrongs done in the fair face of heaven  
Which cry aloud for vengeance, and shall cry ;  
Loves beautiful in strength whose wit has striven  
Vainly with loss and man's inconstancy ;  
Dead children's faces watched by souls that die ;  
Pure streams defiled ; fair forests idly riven ;  
A nation, suppliant in its agony,  
Calling on justice, and no help is given.

All these are pitiful. Yet, after tears,  
Come rest and sleep and calm forgetfulness,  
And God's good providence consoles the years.  
Only the coward heart which did not guess,  
The dreamer of brave deeds that might have been,  
Shall cureless ache with wounds for ever green.

---

## XIII.

To do some little good before I die ;  
To wake some echoes to a loftier theme ;  
To spend my life's last store of industry  
On thoughts less vain than Youth's discordant  
dream ;  
To endow the world's grief with some counter-  
scheme  
Of logical hope which through all time should  
lighten  
The burden of men's sorrow and redeem  
Their faces' paleness from the tears that whiten ;  
  
To take my place in the world's brotherhood  
As one prepared to suffer all its fate ;  
To do and be undone for sake of good,  
And conquer rage by giving love for hate ;  
That were a noble dream, and so to cease,  
Scorned by the proud but with the poor at peace.

---

## XIV.

I thought to do a deed of chivalry,  
An act of worth, which haply in her sight  
Who was my mistress should recorded be  
And of the nations. And, when thus the fight  
Falter'd and men once bold with faces white  
Turn'd this and that way in excuse to flee,  
I only stood, and by the foeman's might  
Was overborne and mangled cruelly.

Then crawled I to her feet, in whose dear cause  
I made this venture, and "behold," I said,  
"How I am wounded for thee in these wars."  
But she, "Poor cripple, would'st thou I should  
wed  
A limbless trunk?" and laughing turned from  
me,  
Yet was she fair, and her name "Liberty."

---



## XV.

Farewell, dark gaol. You hold some better hearts

Than in this savage world I thought to find.

I do not love you nor the fraudulent arts

By which men tutor men to ways unkind.

Your law is not my law, and yet my mind

Remains your debtor. It has learned to see

How dark a thing the earth would be and blind

But for the light of human charity.

I am your debtor thus and for the pang

Which touched and chastened, and the nights of  
thought

Which were my years of learning. See I hang

Your image here, a glory all unsought,

About my neck. Thus saints in symbol hold

Their tools of death and darings manifold.

---

## XVI.

No, I will smile no more. If but for pride  
And the high record of these days of pain,  
I will not be as these, the uncrucified  
Who idly live and find life's pleasures vain.  
The garment of my life is rent in twain,  
Parted by love and pity. Some have died  
Of a less hurt than 'twas my luck to gain,  
And live with God, nor dare I be denied.

No, I will smile no more. Love's touch of pleasure  
Shall be as tears to me, fair words as gall,  
The sun as blackness, friends as a false measure,  
And Spring's blithe pageant on this earthly ball,  
If it should brag, shall earn from me no praise,  
But silence only to my end of days.

---

## REMEMBER O'BRIEN !

SONG FOR THE AUTUMN OF 1887.

### I.

Ireland, wake ! your son lies bleeding,

Stricken through his love for you.

Wake ! arise ! and let your pleading

Wrap your shores in grief anew.

Scatter ashes on your head,

Ireland, for your living dead ;

Fire the beacon, fan the ember

Of your lost wrath, and remember

All the wrong of Clan-na-Gael,

And the man who lies in jail.

Wake ! Remember O'Brien !

### II.

On his plank bed in the darkness,

He is laid who gave you light,

Crisped with cold and prison starkness  
Is the hand your woes did write.  
Dumb the lips are that your cause  
Pleaded against human laws.  
Here as on a bed of passion  
Lies the martyr of your nation,  
All his eloquence grown mute.  
Ireland ! be your wrath afoot,  
Rise ! Remember O'Brien !

## III.

Be not idle in your daring ;  
He nor idleness nor ease  
Knew for you whose whole life's bearing  
Told contempt for things that please.  
What was pleasure to his heart ?  
In your griefs to bear a part.  
What his mirth ? To cheat your laughter  
Of the tears Earth hungers after

With a word of wit or play,  
Which of you dares laugh to-day?  
Nay ! Remember O'Brien !

IV.

Ireland ! plead before high heaven  
For your saint upon his cross.  
His the gain of wrongs forgiven,  
Yours the pain is and the loss.  
Prayers he hardly needs for sin  
Who was blameless most of men ;  
But for your own selfish meekness  
Plead with heaven to nerve your weakness  
For his sake and your right arm,  
With the power of dealing harm.  
Strike ! Remember O'Brien !

V.

Wave your banners, march in chorus,  
Loud with passion, fierce with pain.

Let your trumpets ring sonorous  
With the tramp of angry men.  
Meet your judges face to face  
In each street and market place ;  
There to read in stern derision  
Of their laws your high commission.  
Ay, proclaim them, as is meet,  
Outlaws at God's mercy seat.  
Shout ! Remember O'Brien !

## VI.

Bind them to a new transaction  
For the man who with them lies ;  
Their's was argument in action,  
Action, too, be your replies.  
They have willed it. Let there be  
One campaign from sea to sea.  
Lock your rents in your own coffers  
And compel them to your offers.

Stand out stiffly and unbent ;  
Look ! each hedge lends argument.  
Say, " Remember O'Brien !"

## VII.

Patriots, rise ! take rank together,  
Fight for God and fight for man ;  
In the stormy autumn weather  
Strike for freedom and the Plan.  
He it was who taught you this,  
Here your stoutest vengeance is.  
Blackthorn blows for hours of trial,  
And on gale day stern denial ;  
Till your gaolers on their knees  
Sign the order of release,  
And kneel to William O'Brien.

---

## POOR ERIN.

SONG FOR 1888.

## I.

Oh poor Erin ! Alas poor Erin !  
Where is the land with a fate like yours,  
Blessed with a beauty to all endearing,  
Cursed with a sorrow no fortune cures ?

## II.

Oh poor Erin ! Alas poor Erin !  
What is the cause of your long distress ?  
The hope of freedom forever nearing,  
Forever fading to less and less.

## III.

Oh poor Erin ! Alas poor Erin !  
What have you done that men hate you so ?



You have clung to your God while the rest des-  
pairing  
Bowed their souls in the house of woe.

## IV.

Oh poor Erin ! Alas poor Erin !  
Which are the traitors that brought you blame ?  
The hireling shepherds that did your shearing  
And sold your sheep to the land of shame.

## V.

Oh poor Erin ! Alas poor Erin !  
Which of your sons shall have served you best ?  
The men that died for your sake unfearing  
In prison fetters as felons dressed.

## VI.

Oh poor Erin ! Poor faithful Erin !  
When shall the day of your grief be past ?  
When the mighty ocean shall bring you steering  
To reap your bread on the waters cast.

## VII.

Oh poor Erin ! No more poor Erin !

The hope in your bosom is green to-day,  
The voice of the nations around you cheering,  
Tells that your trouble is past away.

## VIII.

Oh poor Erin ! All hail to Erin !

Revenge was sweet, but true love endures.  
Behold your foeman in anguish rearing  
A home of freedom forever yours.

## THE CANON OF AUGIIRIM.

### I.

You ask me of English honour, whether your  
Nation is just?

Justice for us is a word divine, a name we  
revere—

Alas, no more than a name, a thing laid by in the  
dust.

The world shall know it again, but not in this  
month or year.

### II.

Honour? Oh no, you profane it. Justice? What  
words! What deeds!

Look at the suppliant Earth with its living  
burden of men.

Here and to Hindostan the nations and kings and  
creeds

Praise your name as a god's, the god of their  
children slain.

## III.

Which of us doubts your justice? It is not here  
in the West,

After six hundred years of pitiless legal war,  
The sons of our soil are in doubt. They know,  
who have borne it, best.

The world is famished for justice. You give us  
a stone, your law.

## IV.

These are its fruits. Yet, think you, the Ireland  
where men weep

Once was a jubilant land and dear to the Saints  
of God.

All you have made it to-day is a hell to conquer  
and keep,

Yours by the right of the strongest hand, the  
right of the rod.

V.

History tells the story in signs deep writ on the  
soil,

Plain and clear in indelible type both for fools  
and wise.

Here is no need of books, of any expositor's  
coil.

He who runs may read, and he may weep who  
has eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

VI.

This is the plain of Aughrim, renowned in our  
Irish story

Because of the blood that was shed, the last in  
arms by our sons,

A fight in battle array, with more of grief than of  
glory,

Where as a Nation we died to dirge of your  
English guns.

## VII.

So the Chroniclers tell us, and turn in silence their  
page,

Ending the fighting here. I tell you the Chroni-  
clers lie.

Spite of the hush of the dead, the battle from age  
to age

Flames on still through the land, and still at men's  
hands men die.

\* \* \* \* \*

## VIII.

Look ! I will show you the footsteps of those who  
have died at your hand,

Done to death by your law, alas, and not by the  
sword,

Only their work remaining, a nation's track in  
the sand,

Ridge and furrow of ancient fields half hid in  
the sward.

IX.

Step by step they retreated. You fenced them  
out with your Pale,

Back from township and city and cornland fair  
by the Sea.

Waterford, Youghal and Wexford you took, and  
the Golden Vale.

Tears were their portion assigned,—for you  
their demesnes in fee.

X.

Back to the forest and bog. They shouldered  
their spades like men,

Fought with the wolf and the rock and the  
hunger which holds the hill.

Still new homesteads arose where fever lurked in  
the fen,

Still your law was a sword that hunted and  
dogged them still.

## XI.

Magistrate, landlord, bailiff, process-server and  
spy,

These were the dogs of your pack, which scented  
the land's increase.

Vainly, like hares, they lay in the forms they had  
fashioned to die.

Justice hunted them forth by the hand of the  
Justice of Peace.

\* \* \* \* \*

## XII.

Look at it closer, thus, and shading your eyes  
with your hand,

Far as a bird could reach, to the utmost edge of  
the plain,

What do you see but grass ! and what do you  
understand ?

Cattle that graze on the grass.—Alas, you have  
looked in vain.



XIII.

See with my eyes. They are older than yours, but  
more keen in their love.

See what I saw as a boy in the fields, as a priest  
by the ways,

See what I saw in anger with angels watching  
above

Hiding their faces for shame in the day of the  
terrible days.

XIV.

Horsemen and footmen and guns. They were  
here. I have seen them, though some

Say that two hundred years have passed since  
the battle was stilled.

Ay, and the cry of the wounded, drowned by the  
beat of the drum,

Did I not hear with my ears how it rose like the  
wail of a child?

## XV.

I was a student then, a boy, in the days now forgotten,  
When for our school-house the chapel must serve,  
for our master the priest ;  
Many a Latin theme have I scrawled on the altar-rails rotten,  
Thinking no more of the house of God than the  
house of the least.

## XVI.

Yet we were saints in Aughrim. An Eden the  
plain then stood,  
Covered with gardens round, a happy and holy  
place,  
Rich in the generations of those who had shed their  
blood,  
Bound to their faith by the martyr's bond and  
the power of grace.

XVII.

They do us wrong who affirm the Irish people are  
sad.

Sad we are in the lands afar, but not in our  
home.

Oh, if you knew the gladness with which our  
people are glad,

Well might you grieve for your own, the poor in  
your towns of doom.

XVIII.

Here, God knows it, we hunger. But hunger, a  
little, is well ;

Man with full stomach is proud, his heart is  
shut to the poor.

Well, too, is persecution, since thus through its  
sting we rebel,

Clinging yet more to our love and our hate in  
the homes we adore.

\* \* \* \* \*

## XIX.

Mine is a mission of peace, to save men's souls in  
the world,

Not to make converts to Hell, for Ireland's sake  
even, you say.

Why should I preach of rebellion, and hatred,  
words impotent hurled

Each like a spear from the lips to strike whom  
it lists in the fray?

## XX.

Hark. You shall hear it. This parish was mine.

I remember it all

Tilled in squares, like a chess-board, each house  
and holding apart.

Down where the nettles grow you may mark the  
line of the wall

Bounding the chapel field where our dead lie  
heart on heart.

XXI.

It was not the famine killed them. God knows in  
that evil year

He pressed us a little hard, but he spared us our  
lives and joy.

Only the old and weak were taken. The rest stood  
clear,

Quit of their debt to Death. God struck, but  
not to destroy.

XXII.

The wolves of the world were fiercer. The wolves  
of the world to-day

Go in sheep's clothing all, with names that the  
world applauds.

Nobody now draws sword or spear with intent to  
slay.

Death is done with a sigh, and mercy tightens  
the cords.

\* \* \* \* \*

## XXIII.

It was a woman did it. Her father, the lawyer  
Blake,  
Purchased the land for a song,—some say, or  
less, for a debt  
Owed by the former lord, a broken spendthrift  
and rake—  
And left it hers when he died with all he could  
grip or get.

## XXIV.

Timothy Blake was not loved. He had too much  
in his heart  
Of the law of tenures, for love. No word men  
spoke in his praise.  
Yet, in his lawyer's way, and deeds and titles apart,  
All were allowed to live who paid their rent in  
his days.

XXV.

Little Miss Blake was his daughter. A pink-faced  
school-girl she came

First from Dublin city to live in her father's  
house,

She and her dogs and horses, unconscious of shame  
or blame.

Who would have guessed her cruel with manners  
meek as a mouse ?

XXVI.

Nothing in truth was further, or further seemed  
from her heart,

Set as it was on pleasure and undisturbed with  
pain,—

So she might ride with the hounds when winter  
brought round its sport,

Or angle a trout from the river—than war with  
her fellow men.

## XXVII.

She was fastidious, too, with her English education,

And pained at want and squalor, things hard she should understand.

The sight of poverty touched the sense of what was due to her station,

And still in her earlier years she gave with an open hand.

## XXVIII.

The village was poor to look at, a row of houses, no more,

With just four walls and the thatch in holes where the fowls passed through.

A shame to us all, she averred, and her, so near to her door,

She sent us for slates to the quarry and bade us build them anew.



XXIX.

The Chapel, too, was unsightly. A Protestant she,  
and yet

Decency needs must be in a house of prayer, she  
said.

Perched on a rising ground in sight of her windows  
set,

Its shapeless walls were her grief. She built it  
a new façade.

\* \* \* \* \*

XXX.

What was it changed her heart? God knows. I  
know not. Some say

She set her fancy on one above her in rank and  
pride.

Young Lord Clair at the Castle had danced with  
her. Then one day

Dancing and she were at odds. He had taken  
an English bride.

## XXXI.

This, or it may be less,—a foolish word from a  
friend—

A jest repeated to ears already wounded and  
sore,

A pang of jealousy roused for the sake of some  
private end,

Or only the greed of gain, of more begotten of  
more.

## XXXII.

These were the days of plenty, of prices rising,  
men thought

Still to rise for ever, and all were eager to buy.

Landlord with landlord vied, and tenant with  
tenant bought.

Riches make selfish souls, and gain has an evil  
eye.

XXXIII.

Oh ! the economist fraud, with wealth of nations  
for text,

How has it robbed the poor of their one poor  
right to live !

Only the fields grow fat. The men that delve  
them are vexed,

Scourged with the horse-leech cry of the daughter  
of hunger, "give."

XXXIV.

Why should I blame this woman? She practised  
what all men preach,

Duty to Man a little, but much to herself and  
land.

She made two blades of grass to grow in the place  
of each ;

She took two guineas for one. What more  
would your laws demand ?

## XXXV.

If in her way men died, Economy's rules are  
stern,

Stern as the floods and droughts, the tempests  
and fires and seas.

Men but cumber the land whose labour is weak to  
earn

More than their board and bed ; much cattle  
were worthy these.

## XXXVI.

So those argued who served her. What wonder  
if she too grew

Hard in her dealings around, and grudged their  
lands to the poor ?

Cary, her agent, died. The day she engaged the  
new,

Grief stepped into the village, and Death sat  
down at the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

XXXVII.

Rent. Who speaks of the rent? We Irish, who  
till the soil,  
Are ever ready to pay the tribute your laws  
impose ;  
You, the conquering race, have portioned to each  
his toil,  
We, the conquered, bring the ransom due to  
our woes.

XXXVIII.

Here is no case of justice, of just debts made or  
unjust ;  
Contracts 'twixt freemen are, not here, where  
but one is free.  
No man argues of right, who pays the toll that he  
must ;  
Life is dear to all, and rent is the leave to  
be.

## XXXIX.

No. None argued of rent. Each paid, or he  
could not pay,

Much as the seasons willed, in fatness or hungry  
years.

Blake's old rental was high. She raised it, and  
none said nay ;

Then she raised it again, and made a claim for  
arrears.

## XL.

Joyce was her agent now. The rules of Charity  
bind

Somewhat my tongue in speech, for even truths  
wrongs endured ;

All I will say is this, in Joyce you might see com-  
bined

Three worst things, a lawyer, money-lender  
and steward.

XLII.

His was the triple method to harass by legal  
plan,  
Ruin by note of hand, and serve with the  
Crown's decree ;  
One by one in his snare he trapped the poor to a  
man,  
Left them bare in the street, and turned in their  
doors the key.

XLII.

How many Christian hearts have I seen thus  
flouted with scorn,  
Turned adrift on the world in the prime of life  
and their pride !  
How many lips have I heard curse out the day  
they were born,  
Souls absolved in their anger to die on the bare  
hill-side !

## XLIII.

All for Miss Blake and the law, and Joyce's profit  
on fees ;

All for Imperial order to see the Queen's writ  
run ;

All for the honour of England, mistress of half the  
seas ;

All for English justice, the purest under the  
sun.

## XLIV.

Pitiful God of justice ! You speak of order and  
law—

Order ! the law of blood which sets the stoat on  
the track ;

Law ! the order of death which has glutted the  
soldier's maw,

When Hell lies drunk in a city the morning after  
a sack.



XLV.

Order and law and justice ! All noble things, but  
defiled,  
Made to stink in men's nostrils, a carrion refuse  
of good,  
Till God himself is debased in the work of his hands  
beguiled,  
And good and bad are as one in the mind of the  
multitude.

XLVI.

All in vain we argue who preach submission to  
Heaven.  
Even to us who know it, such mercy is hard to  
find.  
How then submission to Man by whom no quarter  
is given ?  
Vainly and thrice in vain. That nut has too hard  
a rind.

## XLVII.

Then men rise in their anger. Another justice they  
seek.

Maxims of right prevail traced down from a pagan  
age ;

These take the place of the gospel your laws have  
robbed from the weak.

Who shall convince them of wrong, or turn the  
worm from his rage ?

\* \* \* \* \*

## XLVIII

Which are the first fruits of freedom ? Truth,  
Courage, Compassion. A man,

Nursed from his childhood in right and guarded  
close by the law,

Why should he trifle with virtue or doubt to do  
what he can

Fearless in sight of the world, his life without  
failure or flaw ?

XLIX.

All things come to the strong—power—riches—fair  
living—repute—

Conscience of worth and of virtue—plain speak-  
ing and dealing as plain.

Oh, fair words are easy to speak when the world  
spreads its pearls at your foot,

Free is humanity's fetter with pleasure gilding  
the chain.

L.

The Englishman's word, who shall doubt it? The  
poor Celt, truly, he lies.

Fie on his houghing of cattle, his blunderbuss  
fired from the hedge !

Witness swears falsely to murder—You throw up  
your innocent eyes,

Rightly, for murder and lying set honest teeth  
upon edge.

E

## LI.

Yet, mark how circumstance alters. You plant  
your Englishman down

Strange on the banks of the Nile or Niger to  
shift with new life.

All things are stronger than he. He fears men's  
fanatic frown,

Straightway fawns at their knees, his fingers  
clutching the knife.

## LII.

He is kindly. Yet, think you he spares them, the  
servant, the cattle, the child,

The wife he has wedded in falsehood, the Prince  
who clothed him in gold?

Out on such womanly scruples! He boasts the  
friends he beguiled,

The poisoned wells on his track, the poor beasts  
starved on the wold.

LIII.

This is necessity's law—Ay, truly. Necessity  
teaches

Sternly the Devil's truth, and he that hath ears  
may hear.

Only the grace of God interprets the wrong Hell  
preaches.

Only the patience of perfect love can cast out  
fear.

\* \* \* \* \*

LIV.

Joyce was found on his doorstep, stone dead, one  
Sunday morning,

Shot by an unknown hand, a charge of slugs in  
his chest.

The blow had fallen unheard, without either sign  
or warning,

Save for the notice-to-quit found pinned to the  
dead man's breast.

\* \* \* \* \*

## LV.

Oh, that terrible morning of grief to angels and  
men,

I who knew, none better, the truth that until  
that day

Sin in its larger sense was hardly within the ken  
Of these poor peasant souls, what dared I devise  
or say?

## LVI.

A deed of terror? Yes.—A murder? Yes.—A foul  
crime?

True, but a signal of battle, the first blood spilt  
in a war.

Who could foresee the sequence of wrong to the  
end of time?

Who would listen to peace with the red flag  
waving afar?

LVII.

War, war, war, was the issue in all men's minds  
as they stood  
Watching the constable force paraded that after-  
noon,  
War of the ancient sort when men lay wait in a  
wood  
Spying the Norman camps low-crouched in a  
waning moon.

LVIII.

Group with group they whispered. Their eyes  
looked strangely and new,  
Lit with the guilty knowledge as thoughts of  
the dead would pass.  
It was a pitiful sight to mark how the anger grew  
In souls that had prayed as children that very  
morning at Mass.

\* \* \* \* \*

## LIX.

The answer to Joyce's murder was swift. Two  
strokes of the pen,  
Set by Miss Blake's fair hand on parchment  
white as her face  
Gave what remained of the parish, lands, tene-  
ments, chapel, and mill,  
All to a Scotch stock farmer to hold on a single  
lease.

## LX.

Here stands the story written. The parchment  
itself could show  
Hardly more of their death than this great  
desolate plain.  
The poor potato trenches they dug, how greenly  
they grow,  
Grass, all grass for ever, the graves of our  
women and men !

\* \* \* \* \*



LXI.

And did all die? You ask it. I ask you in turn,

“what is death?”

Death by disease or battle, with gaping wounds  
for a door,

Through it the prisoned soul runs forth with the  
prisoned breath,

And what is lost for the one the other gains it  
and more.

LXII.

This is the death of the body. Some died thus,  
fortunate ones.

Here and there a woman taken in labour of  
birth.

Here and there a man struck down on his cold  
hearth stones.

Here and there a child, or greybeard bent to  
the earth.

## LXIII.

Heaven in pity took them. Their innocent souls  
received

All that the Church can give of help on the  
onward way ;

Here as they lived they died, believing all they  
believed ;

Here their bodies rest, clay kneaded with  
kindred clay.

## LXIV.

Every eviction in Ireland brings one such physical  
loss,

Weak ones left by the road, grief touching the  
feeble brain.

None of us mourn such dead who hold the creed  
of the Cross,

Counting as sure their certain hope of eternal  
gain.

LXV.

Not for these is my anger. Love grieves, but the  
cicatrice closes,  
Ending in peace of heart. The dead are doubly  
our own.  
But what of that other death for which love strews  
no roses,  
Death of the altered soul, lost, perished forever,  
gone ?

LXVI.

Deep in the gulf of your cities they lie, the poor  
lorn creatures,  
Made in God's image once, his folded innocent  
sheep,  
Now misused and profaned, in speech and form  
and features,  
Living like devils and dying like dogs in incestuous sleep.

## LXVII.

Seek them where I have found them, in New York,  
Liverpool, London,  
Cursing and cursed of all, a pustulous human  
growth,  
These same Irish children God made for his glory,  
undone,  
Ay, and undoing your law, while black Hell  
gapes for you both.

\* \* \* \* \*

## LXVIII.

There. You asked for the truth. You have it  
plain from my lips.  
Scientists tell us the world has no direction or  
plan,  
Only a struggle of nature, each beast and nation at  
grips,  
Still the fittest surviving and he the fittest who  
can.

LXIX.

You are that fittest, the lion to-day in your strength.

To-morrow ?

Well, who knows what other will come with a  
wider jaw ?

Justly, you say, the nations give place and yield in  
their sorrow ;

Vainly, you say, Christ died in face of the  
natural law.

LXX.

Would you have me believe it ? I tell you, if it  
were so,

If I were not what I am, a priest instructed in  
grace,

Knowing the truth of the Gospel and holding firm  
what I know,

Where should I be at this hour ? Nay, surely not  
in this place.

## LXXI.

Granted your creed of destruction, your right of  
the strong to devour,  
Granted your law of Nature that he shall live  
who can kill,  
Find me the law of submission shall stay the weak  
in his hour,  
His single hour of vengeance, or set a rein on his  
will.

## LXXII.

Where should I be, even I? Not surely here with  
my tears,  
Weeping an old man's grief at wrongs which are  
past regret,  
Healing here a little and helping there with my  
prayers  
All for the sake of Nature, to fill the teeth she  
has whet!

LXXIII.

Not a priest at Aughrim. My place would be  
down with those  
Poor lost souls of Ireland, who, loving her far  
away,  
Not too wisely but well, deep down in your docks  
lie close,  
Waiting the night of ruin which needs must  
follow your day.

LXXIV.

England's lion is fat. Full-bellied with fortune he  
sleeps ;  
Why disturb his slumber with ominous news of  
ill ?  
Softly from under his paw the prey he has mangled  
creeps,  
Deals his blow in the back, and all the carcase  
is still.

## LXXV.

Logic and counter-logic. You talk of cowardice  
rarely !

Dynamite under your ships might make even  
your cheek white.

Treacherous ! Oh, you are jesting. The natural  
law works fairly,

He that has cunning shall live, and he that has  
poison bite.

## LXXVI.

Only I dare not believe it. I hold the justice of  
Heaven

Larger than all the science, and welled from a  
purer fount ;

God as greater than Nature, his law than the  
wonders seven,

Darwin's sermon on Man redeemed by that on  
the Mount.

\* \* \* \* \*



LXXVII.

Thus spoke the Canon of Aughrim, and raised in  
silence his hands,

Seeming to bless the battle his eyes had seen on  
the plain.

Order and law, he murmured, a Nation's track in  
the sands,

Ridge and furrow of grass, the graves of our  
women and men.

\* \* \* \* \*

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